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## State's labour shortage eases

Kim Macdonald, The West  
Australian

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The labour shortage that has long threatened to stall the State's economy is finally easing, with two respected forecasters slashing projections for the shortfall of workers.

A revised forecast by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry tips a shortage of 180,000 workers by 2020, down from the 210,000 figure predicted two years ago.

A CCI spokesman said while strong jobs growth was still on the cards, WA's booming population and training initiatives which had matched skills to job vacancies had reduced the anticipated labour shortage.

The spokesman said the revision was made before recent news that some projects had been put on ice, such as BHP Billiton's \$20 billion outer harbour at Port Hedland, conceding these delays could further reduce the expected shortfall in next year's forecast.

**Pit Crew Consulting** said the labour shortage would fall on the back of reduced demand for workers amid more challenging economic times.

The consultancy anticipated 140,000 construction workers would be needed in the Australian resource sector in mid-2014, a drop of more than 21,000 people compared to its June forecast.

**Principal Peter Dyball** said the revised figure considered current conditions in coal and iron ore, but he believed demand would bounce back to previously forecast levels in a few years time.

"The gap between demand and availability has reduced, without a doubt," he said.

"If the major project market was a car, we're going from 100 miles per hour and easing back to 75 or 80 miles, and some would argue we are in a vehicle that was built to run at 80 miles per hour.

"What we don't see is the car with the brakes on and crashing into reverse, as some commentators would have us believe."

Premier Colin Barnett told the ABC Mornings program that he thought some labour shortage forecasts had been exaggerated.

Mr Barnett said he did not believe the shortage would go beyond 200,000 workers.

While the revised forecasts appear to support union calls to restrict the intake of migrant workers, separate research shows overseas workers play a vital role.

Research by Edith Cowan University, commissioned by the resources employer lobby group AMMA, said east coast workers were reluctant to move to WA, believing it was akin to relocating overseas.



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plug employment gaps with class 457-visa workers because east friends. The research found they also balked at the fly-in, fly-out odation and the perceived high cost of living.

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